



Sharing the Cost of Santa Barbara County's Public Safety Dispatch Center



Audit Report

April 21, 2016



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION
SANTA BARBARA COUNTY AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

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Sharing the Cost of Santa Barbara County's Public Safety Dispatch Center

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- Attachment A - County Sheriff Department Response to Audit Report**
- Attachment B - County Fire Department Response to Audit Report**
- Attachment C - County Public Health Department Response to Audit Report**

Overview

Sharing the Cost of Santa Barbara County's Public Safety Dispatch Center

Introduction

We performed an audit of the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's (Sheriff) sharing of costs for the Santa Barbara County Public Safety Dispatch Center (Dispatch Center) with its partner agencies. Our work was limited to the area specified in the Objective and Scope section of this report. We believe the evidence we obtained provides a reasonable basis for the findings in this report.

Objective and Scope

The objective of our audit was to determine whether the Dispatch Center's costs were shared among partner agencies based upon an equitable methodology. The scope of our audit included the Dispatch Center's costs for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2015, which were \$4.93 million and included 177 thousand calls for services. We did not audit any call data.

Background

The Dispatch Center is one of six primary public safety answering points (PSAP) located in Santa Barbara County. The cities of Santa Barbara, Santa Maria, and Lompoc, as well as the University of California Santa Barbara and Vandenberg Airforce Base, also operate primary PSAPs through their police departments. Primary PSAPs receive emergency 911 calls and dispatch emergency services. The Dispatch Center also takes calls for the Montecito Fire Protection District, which operates a secondary PSAP that can only receive calls transferred from a primary PSAP.

The Dispatch Center has operated under the Sheriff since 1977. The Dispatch Center serves as the single answering point for the County's emergency phone system, and provides joint dispatching services for law enforcement, fire, and emergency medical services (EMS). Law enforcement includes the Sheriff and its contracted cities of Goleta, Carpinteria, Buellton, and Solvang, as well as the Guadalupe Police Department (GPD). Fire includes the Santa Barbara County Fire Department (County Fire) and the Guadalupe Fire Department (GFD). EMS is an agency in the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department (Public Health) that contracts with American Medical Response (AMR) for countywide emergency medical transport services.

The budgeted and actual staffing for the Dispatch Center in fiscal year 2014-15 was as follows:

<u>Position</u>	<u>Budgeted</u>	<u>Actual</u>
Division Commander	0.5	0.5
Dispatch Manager	1.0	1.0
Dispatch Supervisor	6.0	4.9
Dispatcher I/II	24.0	20.1
Mapping Technician	1.0	1.0
Total Full-Time Employees	32.5	27.5

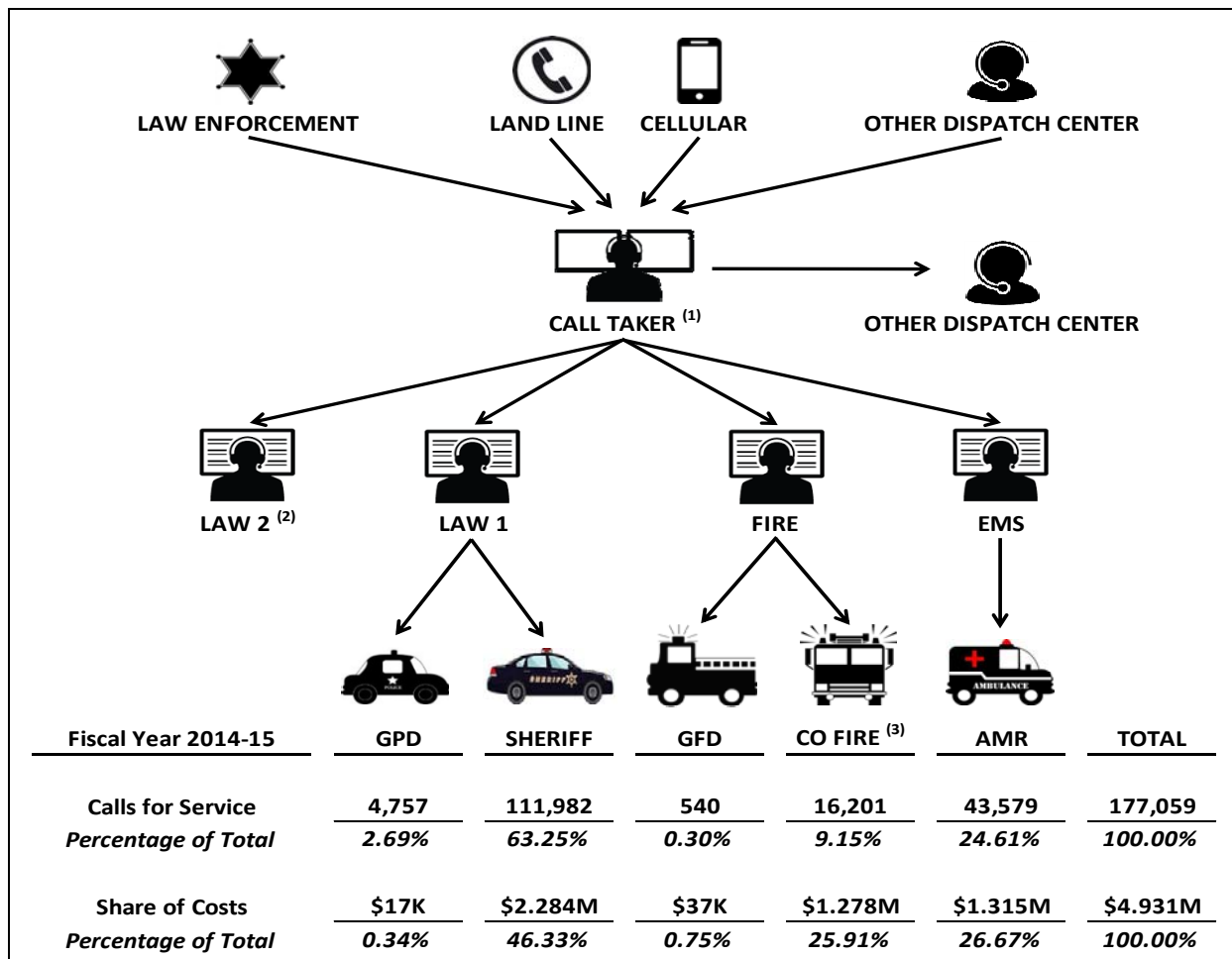
INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION
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Overview

Sharing the Cost of Santa Barbara County's Public Safety Dispatch Center

Emergency 911 calls are received by the Dispatch Center based on the location of the call or are transferred from another primary PSAP, such as one operated by a city. Law enforcement officers may also call in to the Dispatch Center to request information, such as a license plate scan or a criminal background check. The Dispatch Center uses four dispatch work stations (consoles) that are equipped to answer calls and provide dispatch services, with two consoles for law enforcement, one console for fire, and one console for EMS. While the consoles are generally dedicated to these specific disciplines, any console may be used to take any type of call and either transfer the call, provide requested information, or dispatch a service.

An overview of the Dispatch Center's operational structure along with the calls for each type of service and share of costs for each agency in fiscal year 2014-15 are as follows:



(1) There is no fixed call taker position. Call taking is performed by one of the four consoles (usually fire or EMS) or the floor supervisor.
 (2) Law 2 is an administrative line used by law enforcement officers to request information (e.g. license plates, background checks).
 (3) County Fire resources are coordinated by an onsite Fire Captain employed by County Fire to perform command and control functions.

Overview

Sharing the Cost of Santa Barbara County's Public Safety Dispatch Center

The Sheriff determines the Dispatch Center's total costs for the year based on budgeted amounts, and applies additional indirect costs for administration and overhead, which is calculated as a percentage of salaries and benefits (7.55% in fiscal year 2014-15). The total budgeted and actual costs for the Dispatch Center in fiscal year 2014-15 are as follows:

	<u>Budgeted</u>	<u>Actual</u>
EXPENDITURES:		
Salaries and Benefits	\$ 4,090,058	\$ 3,954,262
Services and Supplies	332,436	462,215
Other Charges	199,968	227,071
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	4,622,462	4,643,548
Indirect Costs Applied	308,799	298,547
TOTAL COSTS	<u>\$ 4,931,261</u>	<u>\$ 4,942,095</u>

Next, the Sheriff calculates the share of total budgeted costs for each discipline using cost sharing factors that were developed using the following methodology:

	<u>Disciplines</u>			<u>Grand Total</u>
	<u>LAW</u>	<u>FIRE</u>	<u>EMS</u>	
Dedicated Consoles	2	1	1	4
Share of Supervision *	0.33	0.33	0.33	1.00
Discipline Total	<u>2.33</u>	<u>1.33</u>	<u>1.33</u>	<u>5.00</u>
	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
Cost Sharing Factors	<u>46.67%**</u>	<u>26.66%***</u>	<u>26.67%</u>	<u>100.00%</u>
	(a)/(d)	(b)/(d)	(c)/(d)	(d)/(d)

* Under this methodology, supervision is shared evenly by each discipline.

** Law includes 36.54% for the Sheriff and its contract cities, 9.79% for the Coroner, and 0.34% for GPD.

*** Fire includes 25.91% for County Fire and 0.75% for GFD.

The payments made by County Fire and the City of Guadalupe (GPD & GFD) to the Sheriff are based on the Sheriff's calculations, while the payments received from AMR are determined by the contract between EMS and AMR entered into in 2005. The remaining costs are absorbed by the Sheriff, with a portion of those costs billed to the Sheriff's contract cities. The amounts paid by each agency and the costs absorbed by the Sheriff in fiscal year 2014-15 are as follows:

<u>Sheriff</u>	<u>AMR</u>	<u>Co. Fire</u>	<u>GPD & GFD</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>\$2,213,435</u>	<u>\$1,386,386</u>	<u>\$1,277,690</u>	<u>\$ 53,750</u>	<u>\$4,931,261</u>

Overview

Sharing the Cost of Santa Barbara County's Public Safety Dispatch Center

Conclusion

With certain modifications recommended in this report, the Sheriff's methodology for sharing the Dispatch Center's costs among partner agencies is reasonable and equitable for the current operating model. The Sheriff and its partner agencies should implement the recommendations in this report.

Findings and Recommendations

Sharing the Cost of Santa Barbara County's Public Safety Dispatch Center

Finding 1 – No Written Understanding between Partners

There is no written agreement between the Sheriff and County Fire documenting the arrangement for the provision of dispatch services by the Sheriff for County Fire. Further, while a memorandum of understanding (MOU) does exist between the Sheriff and Public Health, the MOU was agreed to in 2007, expired in 2008, and has not been replaced by a successor MOU.

Recommendation 1: The partner agencies should develop an MOU to provide a framework for the provision of dispatch services by the Sheriff and the equitable sharing of costs.

Finding 2 – Cost Sharing Factors

There are various methods for sharing costs for joint dispatch centers. Three examples include:

1. **Call Volume** – Calculated as each agency's calls for service as a percentage of total calls for service. This method is uncomplicated and easy to understand, but does not take into consideration that some calls take more time and effort to address than others.
2. **Console Usage** – Calculated as each agency's console minutes used to provide dispatch services as a percentage of total console minutes used by the Dispatch Center. This method captures the quantity of dispatch services provided for each agency, however the data is not readily available and the method may involve complex calculations.
3. **Dedicated Console** – Calculated as each agency's number of consoles used to dispatch services as a percentage of total consoles at the Dispatch Center. This method is simple and captures the cost each agency would incur to operate their own dispatch center.

These examples, as well as other methods, may provide an acceptable method for developing cost sharing factors. The Sheriff's current cost sharing factors were developed using the dedicated consoles method, with a weighting factor applied for supervision of each discipline.

Recommendation 2: The partner agencies should agree on a method for developing cost sharing factors that provides for an equitable sharing of costs based on the needs of each agency and services provided to the public. If the agencies continue to use the dedicated console method, supervision should be applied evenly to each console, not discipline. This would result in 50% applied to law, 25% applied to fire, and 25% applied to EMS.

Finding 3 – Dispatch Center Costs

The Sheriff determines the total annual costs for the Dispatch Center based on budgeted amounts, not actual costs. Actual costs may differ from budgeted costs.

Findings and Recommendations

Sharing the Cost of Santa Barbara County's Public Safety Dispatch Center

In addition, we identified the following practices that may overstate the actual costs incurred by the Sheriff for operating the Dispatch Center.

1. **Commander Oversight:** The budget for the Dispatch Center includes 50% of the costs of a Commander (\$139,000 for fiscal year 2014-15). In fiscal year 2014-15, the Commander coded 50% of each work day to the Dispatch Center despite also overseeing the Court/Civil/Records Bureau (57 employees) and the Human Resources Bureau (12 employees). It appears the Commander records time to the Dispatch Center based on budget and not actual time spent working on Dispatch Center activities.
2. **Workers Compensation:** The Sheriff charges workers compensation premiums to the Dispatch Center (\$234,000 in fiscal year 2014-15) using an average rate for all civilian and sworn employees of the Sheriff's department. This method does not take into consideration actual claims experience and payroll for Dispatch Center employees.
3. **Services and Supplies:** We reviewed services and supplies expenditures recorded to the Dispatch Center in fiscal year 2014-15 and noted \$54,000 of the expenditures were incorrectly recorded as fiscal year 2014-15 expenditures. It appears some expenditures for the Dispatch Center are not always recorded in the correct accounting period.

Recommendation 3: Dispatch Center costs should be based on actual costs incurred. All employees charging time to the Dispatch Center should do so based on actual time spent working on Dispatch Center activities. The Sheriff should consider allocating workers compensation premiums to the Dispatch Center based on actual claims experience and payroll for Dispatch Center employees. All expenditures recorded to the Dispatch Center should be accounted for consistently and in the year for which the expenditures relate.

Finding 4 – Understaffing at Dispatch Center

We reviewed a list of employees that coded time to the Dispatch Center in fiscal year 2014-15 and noted the following:

1. 19 dispatchers and six dispatch supervisors collectively earned \$192,000 in overtime during fiscal year 2014-15 for working 3,129 overtime hours at the Dispatch Center.
2. Six Sheriff's Deputies worked 768 overtime hours and 20 regular hours as law dispatchers for total salaries and benefits of \$81,000. Had these hours been worked by an experienced law dispatcher on regular time, the salaries and benefits cost would have been \$50,000, for total cost savings of \$31,000.

Findings and Recommendations

Sharing the Cost of Santa Barbara County's Public Safety Dispatch Center

- Five Sheriff's Sergeants worked 335.5 overtime hours as law dispatchers for total salaries and benefits of \$49,000. Had these hours been worked by an experienced law dispatcher on regular time, the salaries and benefits cost would have been \$22,000, for total cost savings of \$27,000.

According to the Sheriff, the use of sworn law enforcement officers and overtime to operate the Dispatch Center is due to paid-time off, vacancies and an insufficient number of dispatcher positions. However, using higher-paid sworn law enforcement officers and working overtime to operate the Dispatch Center increases the Dispatch Center's cost per labor hour worked.

Recommendation 4: The Sheriff should fill vacancies for dispatchers and determine if additional dispatcher positions are needed in order to staff the Dispatch Center with an appropriate number of employees that can provide a sufficient level of services to the public without using sworn law enforcement officers or regularly working overtime.

Finding 5 – Dispatch Services Provided for Other Governments

The Sheriff charges a portion of the dispatch costs for law enforcement operations to its contract cities. The share of costs for each government in fiscal year 2014-15 and their calls for service in calendar year 2015 are as follows:

	Share of Costs		Calls for Service	
	Fiscal Year 2014-15		Calendar Year 2015	
Contract Cities				
City of Goleta	\$ 250,755	10.9%	19,584	15.4%
City of Carpinteria	118,479	5.1%	10,965	8.6%
City of Buellton	57,687	2.5%	4,239	3.3%
City of Solvang	50,829	2.2%	4,381	3.4%
Total Contract Cities	477,750	20.7%	39,169	30.7%
County Sheriff	1,806,904	78.6%	82,906	65.2%
GPD	16,682	0.7%	5,180	4.1%
Total Law Enforcement	\$ 2,301,336	100%	127,255	100%

Unlike the payments received from County Fire, AMR, and the City of Guadalupe, the payments received from the Sheriff's contract cities for their share of dispatch costs are not included in the budget program for the Dispatch Center. Instead, the payments are recorded as revenues for general law enforcement operations. This increases the County's general fund contribution for the Dispatch Center. All dispatch revenues should be recorded in the same budget program.

Findings and Recommendations

Sharing the Cost of Santa Barbara County's Public Safety Dispatch Center

In addition, we noted the following regarding the Sheriff's methodology for charging dispatch costs to the contract cities that may result in the cities not paying their equitable share of costs:

- The amounts charged do not include any indirect costs for the Sheriff's departmental overhead. Charging departmental overhead to County Fire and the City of Guadalupe and not to the contract cities is not an equitable practice. Charging overhead to the contract cities would have reduced the County's costs by \$36,000 in fiscal year 2014-15.
- There were 69 Coroner cases initiated through dispatch in calendar year 2015. However, the Sheriff's share of dispatch costs for fiscal year 2014-15 includes \$483,000 calculated for the Sheriff's Coroner functions, which represents 22% of the Sheriff's law enforcement dispatch costs for the year and reduces the costs shared with the contract cities. Including these costs in the total law enforcement costs shared with contract cities would have reduced the County's costs by \$128,000 in fiscal year 2014-15.
- The cost sharing factors for the contract cities are calculated using the number of sworn law enforcement officers budgeted for each city as a percentage of the Sheriff's total sworn law enforcement officers. This may not represent the level of dispatch services actually provided to each city and therefore may not provide an equitable sharing of costs by each city. We estimated that using actual call volume would have reduced the County's costs by \$64,000 in fiscal year 2014-15.

We also noted the Sheriff's contracts with the cities of Solvang and Buellton do not state that the County will provide dispatch services for the city. Further, the contract with Solvang does not specify how the costs associated with providing dispatch services are calculated and billed.

In addition to the contract cities, some of the other dispatch centers in Santa Barbara County are not equipped to take certain emergency medical calls that involve choking, childbirth, or cardiac arrest. As a result, these calls are transferred to the Dispatch Center to provide emergency medical services over the phone. The table to the right shows the number of these emergency medical calls transferred to the Dispatch Center from other dispatch centers in Santa Barbara County in calendar year 2015. The Sheriff does not charge these agencies for these services.

	Calls
Santa Maria Police Department	93
Lompoc Police Department	55
California Highway Patrol	49
University of California Santa Barbara	3
Montecito Fire Protection District	2
Total Emergency Medical Calls	202

Findings and Recommendations

Sharing the Cost of Santa Barbara County's Public Safety Dispatch Center

Recommendation 5: The Sheriff should record all Dispatch Center revenues to the same budget program in the County's accounting system. The Sheriff should also determine whether the contract cities and other agencies that receive dispatch services from the Dispatch Center are paying their equitable share of the costs incurred by the County to provide these services. The Sheriff's contracts with the cities of Buellton and Solvang should indicate that the Sheriff will provide dispatch services for these cities. The contract with the City of Solvang should specify how the city's share of costs will be calculated and billed.

Finding 6 – Emergency Medical Services Costs and Payments

Under the Sheriff's cost sharing methodology, the EMS share of the Dispatch Center's costs in fiscal year 2014-15 was \$1,315,167. However, the EMS provider (AMR) paid the Sheriff \$1,386,386 in fiscal year 2014-15 under its contract that expires in 2017. The \$71,219 difference is because AMR pays based on a contracted amount, not actual cost. This additional payment from AMR only reduced the Sheriff's share of costs for the year.

Recommendation 6: In the next contract with an emergency medical transportation provider, Public Health should include payment provisions whereby the provider pays the Sheriff for dispatch services based on the actual EMS share of Dispatch Center costs, as calculated by the Sheriff using an agreed-upon methodology that is consistent with the methodology used for all partners. In addition, the partner agencies should determine if the additional amounts currently received from AMR as well as other amounts received by the Sheriff for the Dispatch Center are being shared equitably amongst the partner agencies.

Acknowledgements

Sharing the Cost of Santa Barbara County's Public Safety Dispatch Center

The responses from the Sheriff, County Fire, and Public Health departments to the findings and recommendations in this report, as well as any planned corrective actions, are presented as attachments to this report. We have not evaluated the validity of these comments.

We appreciate the courtesy extended to us by the Sheriff, County Fire, and Public Health departments. If we can be of further assistance, please contact us at (805) 568-2100.

Respectfully Submitted,



Heather Fletcher, CPA
Audit Manager



Office of the Sheriff

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

STATIONS

Buellton

140 W. Highway 246
Buellton, CA 93427
Phone (805) 686-8150

Carpinteria

5775 Carpinteria Avenue
Carpinteria, CA 93013
Phone (805) 684-4561

Isla Vista

6504 Trigo Road
Isla Vista, CA 93117
Phone (805) 681-4179

Lompoc

3500 Harris Grade Road
Lompoc, CA 93436
Phone (805) 737-7737

New Cuyama

70 Newsome Street
New Cuyama, CA 93254
Phone (661) 766-2310

Santa Maria

812-A W. Foster Road
Santa Maria, CA 93455
Phone (805) 934-6150

Solvang

1745 Mission Drive
Solvang, CA 93463
Phone (805) 686-5000

Sheriff - Coroner Office

66 S. San Antonio Road
Santa Barbara, CA 93110
Phone (805) 681-4145

Main Jail

4436 Calle Real
Santa Barbara, CA 93110
Phone (805) 681-4260

**COURT SERVICES
CIVIL OFFICES**
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1105 Santa Barbara Street
P.O. Box 690
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Santa Maria

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Santa Maria, CA 93456
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April 21, 2016

BILL BROWN

Sheriff - Coroner

BERNARD MELEKIAN

Undersheriff

Heather Fletcher, Internal Audit
Auditor-Controller's Office
County of Santa Barbara

Dear Ms. Fletcher:

Please find below the Sheriff's Office response to the audit report: "Sharing the Cost of Santa Barbara County's Public Dispatch Center".

Finding 1: No Written Understanding between Partners.

Recommendation 1: *The partner agencies should develop an MOU to provide a framework for the provision of dispatch services by the Sheriff and the equitable sharing of costs.*

Response to Recommendation 1: **The Sheriff's Office agrees with this recommendation.**

The Sheriff's Office agrees that an MOU between the Sheriff and the partner agencies should be created.

Finding 2: Cost Sharing Factors.

Recommendation 2: *The partner agencies should agree on a method for developing cost sharing factors that provides for an equitable sharing of costs based on the needs of each agency and services provided to the public. If the agencies continue to use dedicated the console method, supervision should be applied evenly to each console, not discipline. This would result in a 50% applied to law, 25% applied to fire, and 25% applied to EMS.*

Response to Recommendation 2: **The Sheriff's Office partially agrees with this recommendation.**

The Sheriff's Office agrees that, in development of the MOU noted above, a consistent method of allocation of cost should be agreed to by the partner agencies. The Sheriff's Office, however, believes that the Dedicated Console method is by far

the most equitable method of the three mentioned in the report. Finally, the Sheriff's Office does not believe that the supervision cost application of console is superior to the current method of application by discipline. Both methods have their benefits and drawbacks. The method of allocating the cost of supervision will be considered when negotiating the MOU noted in recommendation 1.

Finding 3: Dispatch Center Costs.

Recommendation 3: *Dispatch Center costs should be based on actual costs incurred. All employees charging time to the Dispatch Center should do so based on actual time spent working the Dispatch Center activities. The Sheriff should consider allocating workers compensation premiums to the Dispatch Center based on actual claims experience any payroll for Dispatch Center employees. All expenditures recorded to the Dispatch Center should be accounted for consistently and in the year for which the expenditures relate.*

Response to Recommendation 3: **The Sheriff's Office disagrees with this recommendation.**

The Sheriff's Office believes that allocation of cost based on the budget for the unit is a more accurate method of sharing cost. This complies with the matching principle whereby the revenues of the unit are matched to the expenses of the unit. To allocate cost using actual cost, the Sheriff would have to use costs incurred in the prior fiscal year as the allocation tool. This could lead to a misallocation of cost if extra-ordinary costs were incurred in that year that provided the basis of the allocation. In addition, the difference in cost between budget and actual is minimal. For FY2014-15, the actual financial Uses for the Dispatch Center per FIN totaled \$4,659,708 against an Adjusted Budget total of \$4,736,415. The difference of \$76,707 is less than 2% of the Adjusted Budget.

For workers' compensation insurance, the Sheriff allocates this cost department – wide on an FTE basis without regard to job class or claim history. We could change the allocation process starting in the FY2017-18 budget year but it will take additional staff resources to complete the task due to the number of claims filed by the Sheriff's Office.

The Sheriff's Office does account for all costs in the fiscal year incurred. The \$54,000 issued discovered by your audit was related to the implementation of a project call COPLINK and was truly a one-time event.

Finding 4: Understaffing at Dispatch Center.

Recommendation 4: *The Sheriff should fill vacancies for dispatchers and determine if additional dispatcher positions are needed in order to staff the*

Dispatcher Center with an appropriate number of employees that can provide a sufficient level of services to the public without using sworn law enforcement officers or regularly working overtime.

Response to Recommendation 4: The Sheriff's Office agrees with this recommendation.

The Sheriff strongly agrees with this recommendation. Additional staffing in the Dispatch Center will not only save money on overtime, it will create the ability to flex staff to meet workload needs, decreasing the stress and strain on staff and the customers they serve. In addition, we are waiting on the results of the consultant study to determine if additional positions are needed

Finding 5: Dispatch Services Provided for Other Governments.

Recommendation 5: *The Sheriff should record all Dispatch Center revenues to the same budget program in the County's accounting system. The Sheriff should also determine whether the contract cities and other agencies that receive dispatch services from the Dispatch Center are paying their equitable share of the costs incurred by the County to provide these services. The Sheriff's contracts with the cities of Buellton and Solvang should indicate that the Sheriff will provide dispatch services for those cities. The contract with the City of Buellton should specify how the city's share of costs will be calculated and billed.*

Response to Recommendation 5: The Sheriff's Office partially agrees with this recommendation.

The Sheriff does account for the revenue from Dispatch Services in the same budget program as the expense (Countywide Law Enforcement Operations – 03). The revenue is not tracked in the individual program for dispatch cost center (Program 1032). The portion of the city contract revenue related to dispatch services is recorded in Program 1028 and the appropriate Org Unit. This is done for the purposes of expediency. Dispatch Services are not evaluated financially on the Net Financial Impact of the cost center. The Sheriff monitors performance at the line item level, specifically on Uses so to not exceed budget.

All contract city agreements come up for renewal in 2017. The Sheriff's Office already plans on meeting with the contract cities and renegotiating several terms and conditions within the contracts. The cost and calculation of Dispatch Services will be added to that list.

Finding 6: Emergency Medical Services Costs and Payments.

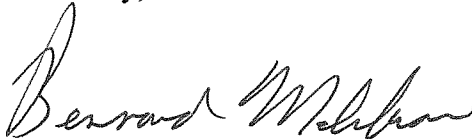
Recommendation 6: *In the next contract with an emergency medical transportation provider, Public Health should include payment provisions whereby the provider pay the Sheriff for dispatch services based on the actual EMS share of Dispatch Center costs, as calculated by the Sheriff using agreed-upon methodology that is consistent with the methodology used for all partners. In addition, the partner agencies should determine if the additional amounts currently received from AMR as well as other amounts received by the Sheriff for the Dispatch Center are being shared equitably amongst the partner agencies.*

Response to Recommendation 6: **The Sheriff's Office partially agrees with this recommendation.**

The Sheriff agrees that the methodology of how the emergency medical transportation provider costs for Dispatch Services should be part of the negotiations at the next contract renewal. While the Sheriff agrees in Recommendation 1 that an MOU amongst the partner agencies is necessary, the Sheriff defers the subject of additional revenue sharing to that negotiation. In that sense, there will need to be a provision for excess cost sharing as well as revenue sharing.

The Sheriff's Office wishes to thank the Internal Audit team of the Auditor-Controller's Office for their time and effort in completing this audit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Bill Brown".

BILL BROWN
Sheriff – Coroner



Fire Department

"Serving the community since 1926"

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Eric L. Peterson
Fire Chief
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Rob Heckman
Deputy Fire Chief

April 8th, 2016

Heather Fletcher, CPA
Audit Manager
Santa Barbara County Auditor-Controller

RE: Public Safety Dispatch Center Draft Audit Report

Recommendation 1 - No Written Understanding between Partners

Agree. A current and on-going review of dispatch operations by an independent consultant will likely support a written agreement for shared dispatch services.

Recommendation 2 - Cost Sharing Factors

Agree. Appropriate sharing of costs will be pursued when constructing a written agreement between County Fire, the Sheriff and EMS.

Recommendation 3 - Dispatch Center Costs

Agree. County Fire will look closely at the actual cost structure to ensure the citizens of the fire protection district are charged appropriately according to actual and reasonable expenditures. The on-going consultant review will likely provide additional guidance.

Recommendation 4 - Understaffing at the Dispatch Center

Agree. While some situations may call for sworn personnel to temporarily staff dispatch positions, this should be minimized through diligence in recruiting and retaining civilian personnel. We will look for innovative ways to meet this need.

Recommendation 5 - Dispatch Services Provided for Other Governments

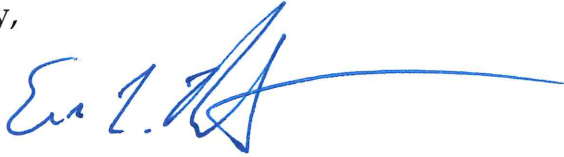
Agree. A cost sharing plan should be created that is equitable and reflects reasonable contributions by all recipients of dispatch services.

Recommendation 6 – EMS Costs and Payments

Agree. While this is primarily an EMS contract issue, we support sharing based on the actual costs of providing the service.

The Fire Department appreciates the effort and thoroughness of the audit and commends your staff for their work in putting this audit together. We hope to be able to report soon that we have made progress in the recommended actions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Eric Peterson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Eric Peterson

Fire Chief
Santa Barbara County Fire Department



Emergency Medical Services

300 North San Antonio Road ♦ Santa Barbara, CA 93110-1316
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John H. Eaglesham EMS Agency Director
Angelo Salvucci, MD EMS Agency Medical Director

April 14, 2016

Heather Fletcher, CPA
Audit Manager
Santa Barbara County Auditor-Controller

RE: Audit Report: Sharing the Cost of Santa Barbara County's Public Safety Dispatch Center, (date)

Please accept Santa Barbara County Emergency Medical Services Agency's (EMS) response to the subject audit.

Recommendation 1 – No Written Understanding between Partners

Agree. County Fire, Sheriff and EMS are jointly conducting a study of the operations of the PSDC utilizing an independent consultant. When the data from that study is received and analyzed a service level agreement will be drafted.

Recommendation 2 – Cost Sharing Factors

Agree. While there are many options and nuances to cost sharing, the parties will find a method that will meet the needs of all and incorporate the cost allocation methodology into the service level agreement referenced in Recommendation #1.

Recommendation 3 – Dispatch Center Costs

Agree. EMS, in cooperation with the Sheriff and County Fire will conduct a cost discovery review to look at these and all other costs as they relate to service expectations. The resolution of this review will be incorporated into the service level agreement.

Recommendation 4 – Understaffing at the Dispatch Center

Agree. EMS will take a more active role in dispatch center governance to assist in securing a reliable stream of qualified applicants and working to retain qualified employees.

Recommendation 5 – Dispatch Services Provided for Other Governments

Agree. EMS will work with the Sheriff and County Fire to make certain all dispatch constituents share in the appropriate costs of the dispatch center.

Recommendation 5 – EMS Costs and Payments

Agree. This action will require a contract amendment. However, this specific contract is due for renewal or re-bidding in 2017. It probably is more efficient to correct the issue within that process.

I want to thank you and Kyle Slattery for your effort and diligence in producing this report. EMS finds it helpful in creating dialog and charting a course for dispatch improvement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Eaglesham", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John Eaglesham, Director
Santa Barbara County
Emergency Medical Services